In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

"Resurrection or Resuscitation?"

By Ahmed Deedat

In one of my books - "Who Moved the Stone?" I had promised to deal with the anomaly, where believers were reading simple English, yet were so conditioned that they were understanding exactly the *opposite* of what they were reading. The following story from real life will not only illustrate the point but will also elucidate our present case -

"Resurrection or Resuscitation"

I was about to leave for the Transvaal (South Africa) on a lecture tour, so I phoned my friend Hafiz Yusuf Dadoo of Standerton, informing him of my impending visit, as well as to inquire whether he needed anything from Durban. He said that as he was taking up Hebrew, I should try and obtain a Bible in the Hebrew language with a translation in English side by side.

I went to the "Bible House" in Durban. Without any difficulty I found the appropriate Bible for my friend, the "Authorized Version," also known as the King James Version, looking for one with the best print and at the cheapest price, I noticed the lady behind the counter had lifted up the telephone to speak to someone. I was out of hearing distance, nor was I interested, but after an exchange with the person on the other side of the line she put her hand on the mouthpiece and addressed me: "Excuse me, sir, are you Mr. Deedat?" I said: "Yes." She said: "The Supervisor of the Bible Society would like to meet you," I agreed. She spoke a few more words into the telephone and replaced the receiver. I said with a smile: "I thought that you were ringing the police." (Perhaps because of the number of Bibles I was handling!). - She laughed and said: "No, it was the Rev. Roberts, the Supervisor, who wishes to speak to you."

Winning a Convert

Presently, Rev. Roberts approached me and after introducing himself he gestured to me to hand over to him the Bible which I was holding in my hand. I handed the book. He opened it and began reading to me: "And this is life eternal that they should know Thee the only True God and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." (John 17:3). (Subsequently, I checked up the Gospel references of his quotations).

After having listened to his reading of this scripture, I responded with the words: "I accept!" - meaning the implication of the Message he was trying to convey to me. I did not tell him then that what he was trying to convey to me was the same as the Holy Qur'ân was telling mankind for the past fourteen hundred years - that all must believe in the One and Only God Almighty, and Jesus Christ is only a Messenger of God. The words of the Holy Qur'ân are as follows: -

"Most Certainly the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was an apostle of Allah and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His Apostles" (The Holy Qur'ân 4:171)

Love One Another

Rev. Roberts must have been elated to hear my words "I Accept," to his first quotation. He quickly opened the Bible in another place and began reading these words attributed to Jesus:-

"A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

A New Convert?

When he had finished reading these verses, I remarked: "Very good!" He was greatly encouraged with my comment. I sincerely meant what I said and there was no pretense. The Reverend found yet another quotation to clinch a convert for Christ. He began:-

"Judge not that ye be not judged." "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matthew 7:1-2)

To this quotation I responded with the words, "I agree!" My only reason for agreeing and accepting everything that the Reverend was reading to me was not of the "special discount" I was getting from the Bible Society on my purchases, but because these particular quotations were conveying the same message and ideals which Allah *subhanahoo wa ta'aala* was commanding the Muslims to preach and practice. I would be spiritually jaundiced to take exceptions to what was common to both of us - the Muslim and the Christian. For me to say that an identical message from my Book (the Holy Qur'ân) was very good, but the same message in his Book (the Holy Bible) was very bad would be hypocritical in the extreme. It would be soul shaming untruth.

The Purpose

What was the real purpose of the Reverend's reading the Scripture to me? Indeed, I was getting a special discount on all my purchases from the Bible Society and I was perhaps the only non-Christian to get such a discount, though it was depending purely on a business transaction, and this information must have been passed on the Reverend as the Head of the Bible Society; that I was a Muslim there was no mistaking my identity, for my beard and my headgear were the badges of my Faith, easily recognized as such in this part of the world; and that, despite my numerous purchases of the Bibles in English (various versions), in Zulu, Afrikaans, Urdu, Arabic and other languages, I was not yet *converted.* Perhaps, what I really needed was a gentle push, the Supervisor must have been told. Hence the recitation of the preceding quotations to me. The implication of this reading was that I had probably not read those beautiful passages; how else was it possible, then, that I had not yet embraced Christianity?

A Problem

The Reverend gentleman had taken the role of a teacher who wanted to teach, who wanted to impart new knowledge to his pupil.

Since I am commanded by my Prophet, peace be upon him, to seek knowledge I wanted to learn. I said: "I agree with all that you have read to me, but I have a problem with your

Bible." "What problem have you got?" he asked. I said: "Please open the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 3 verse 23." This he did. I said: "Please read." He read:-

"And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli," (Luke 3:23)

I drew the Reverend's attention to the words - "(As was supposed)." I said: "Do you see that the words 'As was supposed' are written within brackets?" He said that he saw that. I asked him: "Why are the brackets there?" He acknowledged, "I don't know, but I could find out for you from some Bible scholars." I admired his humility. Though I knew that all Supervisors of Bible Houses in South Africa are retired reverends, it was possible that this aspect of Bible knowledge was beyond their sphere. I said: "If you do not know, then let me tell you what the brackets are doing there in this verse. You do not have to take the trouble of looking for a Bible scholar."

I explained that in the "most ancient" manuscripts of Luke, the words "As was supposed" are not there. Your translators felt that without this interpolation the, ordinary Christians, not well grounded in faith, might slip and fall into the error of believing that Joseph the Carpenter was the actual physical father of Jesus. So they took the precaution of adding their own comment *in brackets* to avoid any misunderstanding. I said: "I am not trying to find fault with your system of adding words in brackets to assist the reader, but what intrigues me is that in all translations of the Bible in the African and Eastern languages you have retained the words "as was supposed" but have **removed the brackets**! Couldn't the nations of the Earth besides the English understand the meaning and purpose of the brackets?

What is wrong with the Afrikaner? Why have you eliminated the brackets from the Afrikaans Bible? The Supervisor protested: "I didn't do it." I said: "I know that you personally did not do it but why have the Bible Society that you represent and your Bible scholars been playing with the 'Word of God?' If God Almighty did not see fit to preserve Luke from error what right has anybody to add to or delete from words in the 'Book of God?' What right have you to manufacture 'God's Words?'

Interpolations

The translator's own addition of words in brackets can easily be put into the mouth of St. Luke by merely removing the brackets, and by implication, if Luke was inspired by God to write what he did, then the interpolations automatically become the *Word of God*, which really is not the case. (More will be said on this subject in the forthcoming publication *Is the Bible God's Word?*) I concluded my explanation with the words - 'Your theologians of the day have succeeded where the alchemists of yore failed - of turning baser metal into shining gold.'"

The English Language

At this stage the Reverend introduced irrelevancies into the discussion and the subject changed. He made some claims which made me say: "You see, sir, you English people do not know your own language." (With apologies to my readers whose mother tongue is English). He quickly retorted: "You mean to say that you know my language better than I do?" I said: "It would be presumptuous on my part to tell - an Englishman - that I understand your language better than you do." "Then what do you mean that we English people do not know our own language?" he demanded. I said again: "You see, sir, you read your Holy Scripture in your mother tongue, like every Christian belonging to a thousand

different language groups, and yet each and every Christian language group understands the facts, *opposite* to what he is reading." "What are you referring to?" he asked.

A Ghost

I continued: "Do you remember the occasion when Jesus returned to that upper room after his alleged crucifixion: 'And saith unto them, (his disciples), 'Peace be unto you'' (Luke 24:36), and his disciples were terrified on recognizing him?" He answered that he remembered that incident. I inquired: "Why should they be terrified?" When one recognizes one's long-lost friend or one's beloved, the natural reaction is to feel overjoyed, elated and one wants to embrace and kiss the hands and feet of the beloved. Why did they get terrified?" The Reverend replied that they (the disciples) thought that they were seeing a ghost." I asked: "Did Jesus look like a ghost?" He said: "No." "Then why did they think that they were seeing a ghost when he did not look like a ghost?" I queried. The Reverend was clearly puzzled. I said: "Please allow me to explain."

Disciples Not Eye Witnesses

"You see, sir, the disciples of Jesus were not eye-witnesses or ear-witnesses to the actual happenings of the previous three days, as vouched for by St. Mark who says that at the most critical juncture in the life of Jesus: "they all forsook him and fled." (Mark 14:50). All the knowledge of the disciples regarding their Master was from hearsay. They had heard that their master was hanged on the Cross; they had heard that he had given up the Ghost; they had heard that he was dead and buried for three days. If one is confronted by a person with such a reputation then the conclusion is inescapable; they must be seeing a ghost. Little wonder these ten brave men were petrified."

"To disabuse their minds from the fear that gripped them, Jesus reasoned with them. He said: 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself' To put it in *colloquial* English, this is how he told them: 'What is wrong with you fellows, can't you see that I am the same person - who walked and talked with you, broke bread with you - flesh and blood in all respects.'

Why do doubts enter your minds? 'Handle me and see, for a spirit has no flesh and bones as you see me have.' (Luke 24:39). In other words he is telling them: 'If I have flesh and bones, then I am not a ghost, not a spook and not a spirit!'" "Is that right?" I asked. "Yes," he replied. I continued that, Jesus is telling them, as recorded in this verse, in basic English, that what the disciples were asked to "handle and see" was not a translated body, not a metamorphosed body and not a resurrected body, because a resurrected body is a spiritualised body. He is telling them in the clearest language humanly possible that he is **not** what they were thinking. They were thinking that he was a spirit, a resurrected body, one having been brought back from the dead. He is most emphatic that **he is not**!"

Spiritualization

"But how can you be so sure that the resurrected body cannot materialize physically as Jesus had obviously done?" murmured the Reverend. I replied: "Because Jesus had himself pronounced that the resurrected bodies get spiritualised." When did he say any such thing?" inquired the Reverend. I answered: "Do you remember the incident as recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 20, where the learned men of the Jews- "the chief priests and the scribes with the elders"- had come to him with a number of posers, and among them was one about a Jewess who had seven husbands in turn, one after another according to a Jewish custom, and in time all seven husbands and the woman too died?" The Reverend

said that he did remember the occasion. I continued: "The trap that the religious hierarchy was trying to spring on him was; which one of the seven husbands was going to possess the woman on the 'Other side'- at the resurrection?- since they reasoned with Jesus that the seven brothers *had her*.

There was no problem while they fulfilled their obligation of trying to give her a child, because they had possessed her one by one in turn, and it was after the death of one that the other had taken her to wife. But since at the resurrection all seven will be brought to life simultaneously, there will be strife in heaven because all seven would want to get at her at the same time, specially if they had pleasure with her."

"Jesus debunked their false notion of the resurrection, by saying that at the resurrection: 'neither shall they die any more' (Luke 20:36) meaning that the resurrected persons will be *Immortalised*. They will not be subject to death any more, no more hanger or thirst, no more fatigue. In short, all the instruments of death will be powerless against the resurrected body. Jesus continues to explain: 'for they (the resurrected bodies) are equal unto the angles,' that is, that they will be *Angelised* - spiritualised, that they will become spirit-creatures, i.e. *Spirits*;'and the children of God, for such are the children of the resurrection." (Luke 20:36).

Jesus Not Spiritualised

I was taken off from the theme I was expounding two paragraphs above by the Reverend with the challenge: "But how can you be so sure..?" To continue from where I had deviated above - He is Not what they were thinking, that he was not a Spirit, not a Ghost, not a Spook. To assure them further after having offered his hands and feet for inspection and verification that his was a material, physical body, and that all their bewilderment and disbelief was unjustified, he asked his disciples: "Have you here any meat?" (Meaning something to eat). "And they gave him a piece of broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and he took it, and did eat before them." (Luke 24:41-43)

A Drama?

What was Jesus trying to prove by all his demonstrations of wanting his hands and feet to be handled and chewing and masticating broiled fish and honeycomb? Was all this a pretense, make-belief, an act or drama? "No!" Said Schleliermacher in 1819, a hundred years before I was born. Albert Schweizer records him saying: "If Christ had only eaten to show that he could eat, while he really had no need of nourishment, if would have been a pretense, something docetic."(*In Quest of the Historical Jesus,* page 64).

I had not know of Schleliermacher and other Christian scholars who over a hundred years ago doubted the death of Jesus on the cross as recorded by Albert Schweizer, when I was discussing this subject with the head of the Bible Society.

No Resurrection

"What is wrong with you (Christian) folk?" Jesus is telling you in the most unambiguous language that he is not a spirit - not spiritualised, not a resurrected person, and yet the whole Christian world believes that he was resurrected, i.e. spiritualised. Who is lying, you or him? How is it possible that you, each and every Christian, are reading your Bible in your own mother tongue and yet *each and every groups is made to understand the exact opposite of what they are reading?* If you read the Bible, say, in Hebrew, and pleaded that you did not understand what you were reading, I can appreciate this fact. If you read it in

Greek and pleaded that you did not really understand the implications of what was written; I can appreciate this fact also. But the anomaly is that you are reading the Book, each and every one, in his own mother tongue, and are trained to understand the opposite of what is written. How have you been brainwashed, or rather, how have you been "Programmed," as the Americans would put it?

"Please tell me as to who is lying? Is it Jesus or a thousand million Christians of the world? Jesus says: "No!" to his being resurrected, and all of you say: "Yes!" Whom are we Muslims to believe, Jesus or his so called disciples? We Muslims would rather believe the Master. Did he not say: "The disciple is not greater than the Master."? (Matthew 10:24)

This was more than the Reverend had bargained for. He politely excused himself by saying that as he had to get ready to close his office, he would look forward to meeting me again. This was sheer evasive politeness!

With the Bible Society, I won the debate but lost the discount! No more discount for me from the Bible Society. But let my loss be your gain. If you dear reader, can remove a few cobwebs from your thinking on the subject of the *Crucifixion*, I will be amply rewarded.

Now here are the verses discussed put together :

"..Jesus himself stood in their midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you...But they were terrified, and supposing that they were seeing a spirit... And he said unto them,.. 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit has no flesh and bones, as you see me have'... And showed them his hands and feet... And while they yet believed not for joy and wondered, he said unto them, 'Have ye here any meat?'.. And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of a honeycomb... And he took it, and did eat before them." (Luke 24:36-43)